



News Release

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Everyone can be an “Olympic” winner in the race for health

Regular exercise and healthy eating — a medal-winning combo

OLYMPIA — You don’t have to be a marathon runner or compete in the decathlon to win a gold medal for your health. Although Olympic athletes train for hours each day, even moderate exercise and small diet changes can pay off in important, lasting improvements for your health.

“The key to health is thinking about it as a marathon not a sprint,” said Dr. Maxine Hayes, state health officer. “By getting regular exercise, eating more fruits and vegetables and watching your calorie intake, you lower your chances of developing chronic diseases and can live a healthier, more active life. And if you want to really go for the gold, give up tobacco.”

Research shows the health [benefits of physical activity](#) include weight control, heart health, reduced risk of Type 2 diabetes, lower risk of cancer and stroke, and improvements in blood pressure and cholesterol. Physical activity improves your quality of life by strengthening your bones and muscles and increases your chances of living an active, fracture-free, longer life.

If you’re just starting out on the path to fitness, start slowly and gradually increase your activity level. Moderate-intensity aerobic activity like brisk walking is safe for most people. The risk of injury rises when someone who isn’t usually physically active begins a vigorous activity like running or snow shoveling. If you already have a chronic illness like diabetes, heart disease or arthritis, check with your doctor before you begin a new activity.

Combining physical activity with nutritious, healthy eating can kick-start your journey on the road to better health. Dietary guidelines focus on three important goals: balancing calories with physical activity to manage your weight; eating more of certain foods and nutrients such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fat-free and low-fat dairy, and seafood; and eating fewer foods with sodium (salt), saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, added sugars and refined grains. [More information, tips, and research on healthy eating are available online.](#)

— More —

Olympics can inspire you to clear hurdles to better health

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Make the commitment to yourself to live a healthy, active life. Find out about [local efforts to create healthier communities](#) where people have convenient access to healthy foods and opportunities for active living. Although very few of us will become elite athletes, we can all strive to win a gold medal for our health.

The [Department of Health website](#) (www.doh.wa.gov) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

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